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**The Contradictory Mandate of the National Park Service:
Crater Lake National Park's Distinctive Position**

**By
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Professor John L. Rector
Western Oregon University
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The National Park Service (NPS) was established in 1916 by an Act of Congress. The Act, known as the Organic Act, established the machinery of a government agency, a director, assistant, and other employees. More importantly, the Act provided some guidelines for how the system should be run and for what purpose. The most famous section of the Act outlines goals for the Park Service: “which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”¹ This mandate, placing an equal emphasis on preservation and recreation, is paradoxical because the two goals of the mandate are at odds with each other. The dual nature of this mandate is virtually impossible to fulfill and has led to park development strategies that tend to be little more than just “muddling through.” Despite the paradoxes inherent in the National Park mandate and incremental policy changes, Crater Lake National Park has managed to develop a strategy that balances the goals of the mandate. Crater Lake’s remote location, weather patterns that limit access during much of the year, and local interests that promote preservation have allowed the Park to develop a unique standing in the National Park System. Less commercialized or tourist oriented than other parks, Crater Lake National Park has the potential to lead the entire National Park System toward greater preservation of ecological resources.

Historical writing about the mission of the National Park Service, in general, and Crater Lake, in particular, has evolved from narratives that emphasize park accessibility to narratives that strive to balance ideas about accessibility with preservation ideals. Frederick Law Olmsted, a prominent landscape architect of the mid-nineteenth century,

in 1865 argued in *The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove* that Congress had set aside Yosemite to be “devoted forever to popular resort and recreation.”² He claimed that Congressmen made this decision based on their desire to protect the lands from becoming private property or from being damaged by industrial development. Olmsted argued that the parks would become their own sources of wealth once they were made accessible. He also claimed that the parks should be a source of national pride and that visitors from Europe would come for the express purpose of visiting the parks.³ When Olmsted was writing, Yosemite was the only park that had been set aside and it wasn’t yet a national park; it fell under the jurisdiction of the State of California. Nonetheless, Olmsted saw the development of parks as a source of pride for the nation.

John Ise claimed in his book *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History*, published in 1961, that the national park policy of the United States has worldwide significance.⁴ This policy has been copied or adapted by many countries throughout the world and is significant as the first policy to place an emphasis on preservation. United States national park policy is even more unique, according to Ise, because it was implemented by a few idealistic men in the face of public apathy and commercial interests.⁵ Ise argued, however, that despite the ground-breaking nature of American park policy, National Parks in the U.S., as of 1961, were in danger of being overrun with millions of people participating in objectionable recreational activities.⁶ The only solution to this problem, according to Ise, was to increase admissions fees at the parks in order to make them less accessible to the common American.

Conrad Wirth, National Park Service Director from 1951 to 1964, claimed in his book *Parks, Politics, and the People*, published in 1980, that the main purpose of the

NPS is management for the use and enjoyment of the people.⁷ He claimed that the primary purpose of the establishment of the parks was to prevent their resources from being exploited for profit. As this was their original purpose, they were virtually impossible to visit during the early years of the Service. Since then, however, various transportation systems improved access. Wirth recognized the problem of damage to the parks by visitors as one of the main focuses of park planning and administration.⁸ Nonetheless, he considered the main goal of the NPS to be recreation rather than conservation.

Historian Alfred Runte, in his book *National Parks: The American Experience*, published in 1987, argued that Congress set aside only “worthless” lands as national parks. Runte claimed that, although the landscapes of the national parks were beautiful, Americans rarely allowed emotional perceptions to get in the way of potential profits.⁹ Therefore, national parks only encompassed land that was considered valueless according to lumbering, mining, grazing, or agricultural interests. In arguing this view, Runte examined the discussions surrounding the legislation that established Yellowstone National Park. Many Congressmen were reluctant to set Yellowstone aside and were only convinced when Senator Lyman Trumbull argued that “at some future time, if we desire to do so, we can repeal this law if it is in anybody’s way.”¹⁰ In other words, because Yellowstone was not perceived as an immediate source of profit for anyone, it was open to park designation. But, if in the future someone discovered an important resource, Runte suggests the park could be “unparked.”

In his book published in 1997, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, Richard West Sellars argues that there has been an ongoing tension between managing national

parks for aesthetic purposes and managing the parks for ecological purposes. Even with this tension, Sellars argues that aesthetics and ecological awareness are not unrelated. According to Sellars, the aesthetic beauty of national parks has helped people to better understand, and have more concern for, the natural environment. In this way Sellars argues that the parks have brought much value to the nation.¹¹

Crater Lake National Park was formally established on May 22, 1902 by an act of Congress, signed by President Teddy Roosevelt. Crater Lake, the deepest lake in the United States and seventh deepest in the world, is located in the only National Park in Oregon. The Park is located on the crest of the Cascade Range in southern Oregon. It is comprised of 183,224 acres and is seen by nearly 500,000 visitors each year.¹² Crater Lake National Park occupies a unique position in the National Park Service. Its early history follows the development trends of the entire service on a smaller scale. However, because the weather limits access to the park for more than half of each year, there has been less damage to the park's ecosystem. In addition to that, there has been an important emphasis on scientific research at the lake ever since the park was designated. These differences put Crater Lake National Park in a position to be an example to the rest of the National Park System. Despite this potential, Crater Lake is still faced with the question of how to fulfill the two goals of preservation and recreation as defined in the National Park Service mandate. The difficulty in fulfilling these two contradictory goals leaves the park without a clear, singular purpose and that has been reflected in development strategies. To better understand the dualities of the National Park System, it is important to understand the reasons behind its establishment.

The National Park Service was formally established in 1916 but its roots were established much earlier. The first park created in the United States by federal action was Yosemite. The land of the Yosemite Valley was granted by the federal government to the State of California on June 30, 1864. The grant carried with it a stipulation that “the premises shall be held for public use, resort, and recreation; shall be inalienable for all time.”¹³ The motivations behind preserving the Yosemite Valley were visible; the experience of Niagara Falls had taught the nation an important lesson. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Niagara Falls had been the most famous and important scenic landscape in the nation. However, no effort had been made to protect the area for everyone’s enjoyment. Landowners erected large fences around what they considered their views and charged high prices for visitors to peep through holes in the fences. The landscape became corrupted by souvenir stands and was no longer a place of enjoyment.¹⁴ During this era, land that was uninhabited by humans was seen as more virtuous, somehow more natural. In setting aside Yosemite, Congress was reacting to a national sentiment that held the frontier and uninhabited wilderness as America’s most important asset.¹⁵

Yellowstone Park, the United States’ first national park, was established on March 1, 1872. The act establishing the park clearly outlined its boundaries and proclaimed the land “...reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States...”¹⁶ The act also called for the land to be “...set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”¹⁷ This was the true beginning of the NPS. The act provided authority to the Secretary of Interior, who was supposed to maintain the park in its natural condition.

Yellowstone was established during a time period when the federal government was actively ridding itself of public lands through huge land grants to railroads, homesteads, and through mining and timber acts. This fact leads to the question, what were the reasons Yellowstone was created? A variety of answers to this question have been offered. One version cites purely altruistic motives. According to legend, a group of amateur explorers investigating the area camped in what is now Yellowstone Park. As they discussed the sights they had seen and thought about what might be done with the area, they recognized the value of the land to sightseers, as well as for scientific research. They knew a large profit could be made by whomever controlled this land. Still inspired by the wonders they had seen, they rejected the idea of private profit and agreed that the area should be reserved as a park for all Americans.¹⁸ This mythological version is what the NPS wants us to remember.

Another version of the story cites motives that are guided more by profit than by altruism. This version features the same amateur explorers, although it points out certain important loyalties of the explorers. The members of this amateur expedition were actually backed by the Northern Pacific railroad. The Northern Pacific believed that once they extended their tracks further west they would be able to monopolize the provision of tourist traffic into the area. After the campfire discussion, Northern Pacific sponsored a lecture tour promoting the Yellowstone area and commissioned an artist to make sketches. These sketches were sent to Washington D.C. to help further the campaign to set Yellowstone aside as a park. According to this version, the park came into existence not because of the desire to preserve large amounts of land undisturbed but due to

corporate profit motives.¹⁹ Through the legislation which protected Yellowstone, Congress declared that tourism was going to be an important part of the American west.

Another important reason for the establishment of the parks was a feeling of inferiority. Nineteenth century Americans were embarrassed by the lack of a national cultural identity, when compared to Europe's established artistic, architectural, and literary heritage. This feeling of inferiority is best seen in the tradition of the "Grand Tour." Many upper class Americans of this time period, eager to give their children a more classical education, sent them on a Grand Tour of Europe. This tour allowed the young person to take in the historic landscapes, classic temples, art, and literature that Europe had to offer. According to the Romantic thinkers of the time, this inferiority based on a missing cultural heritage could be more than made up for in natural wonders. Therefore, with the development of national parks, the American landscape became a substitute for this missing cultural tradition and a source of national pride. This substitution was accomplished through the setting aside of parks as a cultural heritage.²⁰ This viewpoint is most succinctly expressed through the descriptions of Yellowstone Park recorded by Henry Washburn, an 1870 explorer. In articles describing Yellowstone, Washburn described a stream that ran "between a procession of sharp pinnacles, looking like some noble old castle, dismantled and shivered with years, but still erect and defiant."²¹ The discovery of Yellowstone allowed the United States to attain the appearance of antiquity.²² In other words, the national parks allowed Americans to foster a sense of national identity that was rooted in the past - - a feeling that was deeply desired by a nation just recovering from the ravages of the Civil War.

National Parks are also a reflection of American Romanticism. Romantics believed that personal experience was more important than scientific exactness.²³ Romantics often looked down on urban life and “went to the woods” for inspiration. National parks offered an escape from society, a place to express individuality and come closer to God. A perfect example of this type of romanticism is Henry David Thoreau. In 1862, Thoreau compared nature with “absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil.”²⁴ Fifty years later, John Muir retreated from civilization and began writing and thinking in ways similar to Thoreau. Muir took the philosophy of Thoreau and made it the basis of a national campaign for the appreciation and preservation of the natural environment.²⁵ Muir helped introduce the nation to the national parks and claimed that they were a necessity, “not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.”²⁶

This American Romanticism can be seen in the life of William Gladstone Steel, the man often credited with being the “Father of Crater Lake National Park.” Steel combined his romantic ideas about the virtue of nature with progressive ideas about efficiency. Steel believed Crater Lake was a place where people could rejuvenate themselves. He formed a mountaineering club, the Mazamas, with the purpose of teaching other people about the natural wonders of Oregon and promoting progress and development in the region. Steel combined a romantic belief about the virtue of “open, wild and beautiful places” with the progressive belief that nature could be improved upon. This desire to improve nature was the foundation of his campaign to create the park and can be even in his earliest interactions with the park. One of the first things

Steel did to increase interest in the lake, years before it was designated a park, was to stock it with fish.²⁷ Steel believed that humans could increase nature's potential.

According to legend, Steel first learned about Crater Lake as a fifteen year old boy in Kansas. His lunch was wrapped in a newspaper which had a story describing a sunken lake that had been discovered in a mountain in Oregon. In 1872, Steel moved to Portland, Oregon with his parents and discovered that no one knew anything about this lake. It took him seven years to find anyone who had even heard about Crater Lake.²⁸ Upon graduation from high school, Steel entered an apprenticeship with Smith Brothers Iron Works of Portland and became a pattern maker. Throughout his life, however, his interest in mountaineering and promoting and developing Crater Lake was the most important focus of his free time.²⁹

Steel first visited the lake during the summer of 1885 with a group of six other men, two of whom were on leave from the U.S. Geological Survey. Steel and one of his companions, Clarence E. Dutton, were the two people most interested in protecting the lake as a park, but only as a national park. A bill introduced in Congress in early 1888 by Senator Joseph Dolph, proposed giving the land surrounding Crater Lake to the State of Oregon for a state park. Steel vehemently opposed this idea, claiming that the "state would never make proper provisions for the park's maintenance."³⁰ Even though, at this point, the federal government had done little to maintain the existing National Parks, Steel was convinced that designation as a national park was the best way to protect Crater Lake for the long term. Steel's perception that the federal government would provide better care for the park seems paradoxical in view of actual management patterns at already existing parks. However, this view is only one of a long line of misconceptions

about the role of the federal government in Oregon. Despite Steel's objections, Senator Dolph continued to pursue the state park option for Crater Lake. Eventually, Steel's opposition and a general congressional apathy to park legislation combined to stop the bill in the House Committee on Public Lands.³¹ After this, the idea of creating a park was abandoned for awhile.

In March 1902 the movement to have Crater Lake designated a national park regained momentum. A petition Steel circulated throughout Oregon publicized the issue and led to the unanimous recommendation of the House Committee on Public Lands to approve the bill. Binger Hermann, Commissioner of the General Land Office, Thomas Ryan, Acting Secretary of the Interior, and a variety of scientists including J.S. Diller and C. Hart Merriam supported the recommendation. Despite this support, the bill met significant opposition, most notably from House Speaker David Henderson, a Republican, of Iowa. Henderson refused to allow debate on any of the numerous national park and battlefield bills that were before the House at that time. Oregon Representative Thomas Tongue, also a Republican, and Steel, appealed to President Theodore Roosevelt, who asked Speaker Henderson to allow debate on the bill.³² Even with the President's support, the bill faced opposition, particularly from Representative Charles Bartlett, a Democrat from Georgia. Bartlett asked Tongue to describe the character of the proposed park land. Tongue described the park as "a very small affair...contains no agricultural land of any kind but consists wholly of a mountain."³³

After this statement, other Representatives, including John Stephens of Texas, Eugene Loud of California, and Joseph Cannon of Illinois, asked Tongue numerous questions about the park lands. The other Representatives were interested in whether the

park contained any mineral resources, if the bill would prohibit prospecting, and what the proposed penalty would be for any prospectors found on park property. The bill was narrowly approved by the House of Representatives, but only after a clause was inserted at the insistence of Representative Loud allowing the park to be open to “the location of mining claims and the working of the same.”³⁴ Finally, nearly 17 years after Steel had originally brought up the idea, President Theodore Roosevelt signed Crater Lake National Park into existence.

Because the National Park Service had not yet been formed, administration of Crater Lake fell under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior, at that time a man named Ethan Allen Hitchcock. The responsibility for individual park operations, development, and planning was given to a park superintendent. Despite Steel’s integral role in the movement to have Crater Lake designated a national park, he was not selected to be the superintendent of the new park. In this era, the job of superintendent was essentially a political patronage position controlled by state political parties and some have attributed Steel’s rejection to a lack of political connections. The truth is Steel was almost too connected. Steel, a Republican, knew and had clashed with virtually all of Oregon’s political figures, both Republican and Democrat. Oregon’s political leaders didn’t give the job to Steel because they didn’t think he would take the job quietly; they were worried that Steel wouldn’t be satisfied with his victory and would press for more appropriations, an expanded park boundary, and greater attention for Crater Lake.³⁵

Instead of Steel, William Arant was appointed superintendent of Crater Lake. Arant was an active Republican and cattle rancher from Klamath Falls. In June 1902 Arant established the first park headquarters approximately six miles from the lake.

During his first year as park superintendent, he laid a new five-mile road from the base of the mountain to the rim of the crater. Arant planned this road and made other development decisions based on conversations with campers and park visitors. Arant observed, as a result of these conversations, that there was a general feeling “in favor of preserving the natural picturesqueness of the reservation.”³⁶ Based on these observations Arant built the road to facilitate visitation to the lake.

It soon became obvious that the dollar amount of Congressional appropriations, only \$2000 for fiscal years 1902, 1903, and 1904, was not enough to accomplish any significant development. For a number of years, even before the creation of the park, Steel had been attempting to have hotels and other accommodations established at Crater Lake.³⁷ Accommodations for visitors in the national parks can be handled in several ways: 1) private ownership and operation of hotels with either competition or regulation to keep prices down; 2) government ownership with private operation, again either competitive or regulated; 3) government owned and operated; 4) government owned and non-profit or co-operatively operated; or 5) banned entirely. In the early years of the service the only option really considered was private ownership and operation. Congress was hesitant to appropriate money even for administration of the parks, so government construction and operation was impossible.³⁸ Even so, private ownership of facilities on public lands seems somewhat paradoxical. Nonetheless, this is the basic model the park service has used throughout its history.

In 1907, as a result of lobbying by Steel, concession services were offered for the first time at Crater Lake. In section three of the act establishing Crater Lake as a National Park, concession activities are specifically mentioned: “Restaurant and hotel keepers,

upon application to the Secretary of the Interior, may be permitted by him to establish places of entertainment within the Crater Lake National Park for the accommodation of visitors...”³⁹ Steel thought concessions were necessary at Crater Lake so that Oregon’s national park would be able to “divide honors with Yellowstone and Yosemite for the tourist trade.”⁴⁰ In order to make this transition to tourist destination, it was necessary for permanent camps to be established, food services to be brought to the lake, railroads to move closer to the park, and accommodations to be built for guests.

To meet these goals Steel and Portland developer Alfred Parkhurst formed the Crater Lake Company on May 22, 1907. This company acquired the rights to conduct camping parties and establish permanent camps within park boundaries. With these rights came expectations of other rights in the future. These privileges were expected to include construction and maintenance of hotels, placement of boats on the lake, stage lines to the park, and sale of merchandise.⁴¹ The Crater Lake Company was given concession rights in a five year contract with unlimited possibility for extension. The contract was awarded as the result of lobbying by Steel; there is no evidence that the contract was open to bids by other companies.⁴² It seems that when Steel and Parkhurst finalized the articles of incorporation of the Crater Lake Company they were automatically awarded the concessions contract.

By 1911 the Crater Lake Company was facing severe financial and contractual problems. Steel claimed that, because the government only offered a five year contract on concessions, they were limiting development possibilities. In his view, this problem could only be solved with 20 year contracts.⁴³ In response to these complaints the Department of Interior, under Secretary Walter L. Fisher, granted the company a 20 year

lease on two parcels of land in the park. At the same time, in order to defuse charges that it had given the company a monopoly on concessions, the Department granted contracts to two other companies. Klamath Development Company was contracted to provide transportation services and Oregon Art Company's photographer J.W. Stephenson was contracted to "carry out the business of photography, including the selling of views and postal cards."⁴⁴ This helped quiet the concessions controversies for a short time.

Arant accomplished some significant development during his tenure as park superintendent. In 1903 Arant made significant improvements to the main park road and constructed a 50 foot bridge across Bridge Creek. Arant and his family spent the spring and summer months at Camp Arant and, when the weather became unbearable in October, moved park headquarters to Klamath Falls. Arant was able to continue patrolling the park until November 18, when the snow became so deep that travel was "entirely impracticable." From that date until June 1 the following year, the park was inaccessible.⁴⁵ Throughout the rest of his tenure as superintendent, Arant made what improvements he could with the little that was appropriated for the park each year. He also lobbied ceaselessly for an extensive road building program at the park. Congress finally responded to Arant's request, and to the growing presence of automobiles in the park, and appropriated \$627,000 for the improvement and construction of roads in 1912. Although the road building program was Arant's idea, the bulk of the work was carried out under Steel's administration.⁴⁶

Steel had never been fully supportive of Arant as Superintendent. He had never really gotten over the humiliation of being passed over for the position in the first place and firmly believed that most of the significant accomplishments at the park had occurred

as a result of his initiative, not Arant's.⁴⁷ This feeling only became more pressing as development at the park progressed much more slowly than Steel wanted. Steel lobbied a number of politicians to have Arant replaced, preferably by himself. In a July 1912 letter to Assistant Secretary of the Interior Carmi A. Thompson, Steel wrote

*I am not the only one here who objects to the present administration of affairs, for there are many others, several of whom have come to me with a request that I permit them to use my name for the place and they would at once start a move for a change of Superintendent. Frankly, I believe I can give an administration that will please both the government and the public, and because I am so deeply interested in the matter, I am willing to make any sort of sacrifice that is necessary to bring it to pass.*⁴⁸

Finally, in November 1912, Democrat Woodrow Wilson was elected to replace Republican William Howard Taft. Steel used this transition to try to convince Arant to resign. Even though Steel, like Arant, was a Republican, he had quite a lot of Democratic support because of his involvement with the movement to create Crater Lake National Park. When Arant refused to voluntarily resign his position, the new Democratic Secretary of Interior, Franklin Lane, asked for his resignation and appointed Steel.⁴⁹ The controversy over superintendents was not settled with Arant's resignation. In fact, Arant refused to leave the park and had to be forcibly removed by the Federal Marshall. Following his removal, Arant initiated legal proceedings against the Secretary of Interior. The courts, however, confirmed Lane's argument that Arant was a political appointee and, as such, could be removed from office at any time and for any reason.⁵⁰

After this controversial beginning, Steel's tenure as superintendent was relatively short lived. His first act as superintendent was to enlarge and reorganize the park's headquarters and change the name from Camp Arant to Annie Spring Camp. He also was

able to make significant improvements, as a result of Arant's lobbying, to the park's road system. By the end of his term as superintendent, Steel had overseen the development of 47 miles of roads, eight miles from the southern entrance of the park to park headquarters, seven miles from the western entrance to the same point, five miles from headquarters to Crater Lake Lodge, six miles from the eastern entrance to the rim of the lake, and 22 miles from a point on the eastern side to a point on the western side which left only 12 to complete the circle of the lake.⁵¹ These improvements, along with an increase in automobiles, led to a 60 percent increase in visitors between 1914 and 1915.⁵² Steel also focused much of his attention on the effort to expand the park's boundaries and ranger force.

The most important event during Steel's term as superintendent was the opening of Crater Lake Lodge in 1915. The Crater Lake Company, in which Steel retained a financial interest, had begun work on the lodge in 1909. Construction was a long process because, at the beginning of each summer, before new work could be started, existing structures had to be repaired due to winter damage. Construction could only be accomplished between May 1 and September 1 each year. This meant that, even after six years of work, the lodge was still unfinished at the opening ceremonies in 1915.⁵³ Aside from this landmark event, little else was accomplished during Steel's superintendency. Steel discovered that it was very difficult to obtain government appropriations for the park. Despite his criticism of Arant, Steel accomplished no more development than would have been likely to occur had Arant remained superintendent.

The national movement to create a park bureau ended Steel's superintendency of Crater Lake. Throughout the Department of Interior, there was a feeling that supervision

of the parks was somewhat haphazard. In fact, the department didn't really have the skills or training to handle the diverse tasks that come with managing a national park.⁵⁴ Compounding this problem of insufficient experience was a lack of central control. Some parks were managed by the Department of Interior, some by the Department of Agriculture, and still others by the War Department. This meant that operations within the parks were subject to a wide variety of regulations. Even within a single park, divisions of authority were often confusing.⁵⁵

The consequences of the lack of central control were costly. With no administrative authority as a check, it was relatively easy to pass a park proposal if there was some congressional support. This led to the establishment of inferior parks like Mackinac, Platt, and Sully's Hill, which had only modest scenic value forced into the system by people interested in making a profit or obtaining Congressional appropriations.⁵⁶ Sully's Hill best describes the consequences of a lack of central control. Sully's Hill became a park almost by default. In April, 1904 Congress passed a bill amending an agreement with the Indians of the Devil's Lake Reservation in North Dakota. One section of that bill stated that the President might reserve a tract near Sully's Hill as a park. From the time of the passage of that bill, people simply referred to the area as a national park and it was often included on lists of national parks. Finally, the park was officially recognized by Congress but received very few appropriations. Eventually, in 1931, Sully's Hill, which had been ignored since its unplanned creation, was changed into a national game preserve and transferred to the Department of Agriculture.⁵⁷

Similar stories can be told of Mackinac National Park, which was eventually turned into a Michigan State Park, and Platt National Park, over which the National Park Service is still fighting with the State of Oklahoma.⁵⁸ These three parks drained money that could have been used at other parks and often added fuel to arguments in opposition to all parks. These difficulties underlined the need for a centralized authority.⁵⁹ The National Park Service Organic Act, passed in 1916, created a department with the expertise to handle the issues of landscape management, forestry, sanitation, and construction. This centralized control was intended to be more efficient and provide the parks with a “definite, systematic, continuous policy”.⁶⁰

The first director of the National Park Service was Stephen Mather. Mather brought in a staff composed primarily of engineers and landscape architects and began enthusiastically developing the parks for tourists. Landscape architects and engineers were responsible for overseeing the planning, design, and construction of park facilities. These professionals worked to ensure that development did not intrude on scenery and that it displayed scenery to its best advantage.⁶¹ At Crater Lake National Park this focus on landscape architecture added some planning and thought to development. Where Arant and Steel had been focused solely on how to make the park more attractive to visitors, the Mather administration wanted to increase accessibility while enhancing the scenery of the parks. Mather saw the scenery of the parks to be their greatest asset. Therefore, landscape architects became the center of the new service. In fact, some service members advocated that all park superintendents, and even the director, should be trained in landscape architecture.⁶²

Mather's main focus was on recreation and this was supported wholeheartedly by the Secretary of the Interior. In 1925, Secretary of Interior Hubert Work sent Mather a statement reiterating the policy governing the administration of the parks. He outlined the policy based on three principles. "First, the national parks must be maintained untouched...unspoiled... [and] preserved by future generations as well as our own. Second, they must be set apart for the use, education, health, and pleasure of all the people. Third, the national interest must take precedence in all decisions affecting the parks."⁶³ Secretary Work went on to discuss issues of preservation, cattle grazing, cutting of trees, and construction of roads. For Crater Lake National Park, the most important part of Secretary Work's statement was the emphasis on education and scientific use in the parks.⁶⁴ Scientific experimentation had been important at Crater Lake since 1883 when John Wesley Powell investigated lava flow and rock formations near the lake. These studies led to the formation of the theory that the mountain top had collapsed rather than been blown away.⁶⁵ Secretary Work's emphasis on this aspect of park management reassured the scientific community of their important place in the NPS. Despite this emphasis on education and scientific investigation, Work still believed the most important emphasis of the NPS should be that "the parks and monuments should be kept accessible by any means practicable."⁶⁶ After nearly a decade, the belief was still widely held that the parks could be maintained unspoiled while at the same time catering to the recreational desires of the people.

The new National Park Service, and Director Mather, had a big effect on Crater Lake. The most obvious effect, at least initially, was the removal of Steel from the role of superintendent. Officially, Steel resigned his position; but only after being publicly

challenged by Mather.⁶⁷ In the summer of 1915, before being named Park Service Director, Mather toured many of the western national parks. Visiting Crater Lake with Horace Albright, Mather observed, “The beauty was breathtaking, but we were appalled at the condition of the concession facilities and the paucity of park development.”⁶⁸ Mather urged Portland business interests to invest in improvements at Crater Lake as part of his larger plans for a park-to-park highway chain. More investment from state residents was necessary in Oregon because Mather considered Crater Lake to be one of the most “backward” national parks.⁶⁹

During the first year that Crater Lake was under the administrative authority of the park service, three new trails were constructed, all radiating from the lodge. These new trails were constructed with the idea of providing accessibility to “men, women, and children of all ages and conditions of health.”⁷⁰ The new trails, according to Mather, would encourage people to stay at the park longer. This was an important part of Mather’s focus for Crater Lake and other park service areas. Mather believed it was necessary to have “uniform policy in the improvement of all parks...for the benefit of the tourist solely and with his constant interest in mind.”⁷¹

In 1917 Mather and the Southern Pacific Railroad completed negotiations which resulted in a collaborative program of visitation. Travelers with tickets from Portland to various destinations in California, or vice versa, were allowed to stop over in Medford to visit the park. After the visit, they could continue on to their destination through Klamath Falls without paying an additional fare.⁷² This was one of many programs Southern Pacific had with the park service. The company was an important sponsor of all the West Coast National Parks and lobbied for the parks in Congress. Southern Pacific’s passenger

department was also the founder of *Sunset* magazine, which was designed for the express purpose of inviting settlement and tourism to states served by the railroad. In this way, the Southern Pacific Railroad profited from the national parks for many years.⁷³

The railroads did more than publicize the parks. They offered special summer rates to the parks and package deals whereby a tourist could visit more than one park on a trip, often utilizing more than one railroad.⁷⁴ In their quest for more passengers, the railroads were not hesitant to work together. The railroads actively informed the public about the parks, and not just because they were so beautiful. At Crater Lake, a program allowing passengers to get off the train in Medford and board a different train in Klamath Falls required the railroad to provide automobile service to the park. Many railroads provided accommodations in parks, including Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Yellowstone, as well as transportation to the parks.⁷⁵ The luxurious hotels in these parks helped the railroads to continue to profit even after automobiles became the more popular mode of transportation to the parks.

Despite his dealings with the Southern Pacific, Mather was not solely interested in railroad tourism in the national parks. Instead, he saw the newly burgeoning automobile society as the wave of the future. Mather worked closely with local and national automobile associations to encourage tourism. He also advocated preparing the parks for an influx of automobiles by constructing new roads and repairing existing highways. In 1915 Mather founded the National Park to Park Highway Association which lobbied for the creation of a circular highway system in the West that would allow tourists to visit each of the parks.⁷⁶ Crater Lake would be prominently featured in the park to park loop because Mather considered it one of the “crown jewels” in the NPS.⁷⁷ Mather’s plan was

that the park to park highway system would encourage people to visit Crater Lake while driving between the more popular parks of Yellowstone and Yosemite.

Mather used other methods to promote the parks as well. He exhibited numerous national park paintings by various painters, most importantly Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Hill, and Thomas Moran. The techniques utilized by these artists allow intimacy with the scenes portrayed; viewers of these paintings feels as if they are actually seeing what is represented.⁷⁸ Reproductions of these works were featured in booklets, often funded by railroads hoping to encourage tourism. Besides these artistic exhibitions, Mather also sponsored trips through some parks. On these trips senators, reporters, and other influential people were able to see the parks and, hopefully, return home excited about appropriating additional funds for the parks or encouraging their readers to visit as well.⁷⁹

Development at Crater Lake continued virtually without stop throughout the Mather era. A comprehensive road system within the park, comprising a total of 57 miles, was completed in 1918; this was really the completion of projects started by both Arant and Steel. At the same time, an improved system of roads leading from nearby towns to the park was completed, allowing easy travel from both Medford and Klamath Falls. 1917 also saw the construction of upgraded utility systems; the telephone system was revamped and a water system was established on the rim, “for the use of campers and for other purposes.”⁸⁰ During all of these improvements it was the goal of landscape engineers that the area be planned “so that thousands of visitors could use it without further permanent damage to its inspirational beauty.”⁸¹

Mather’s period of influence in the park service brought with it extensive road building and increases in congressional appropriations for park roads. Mather believed

that every park should have at least one major road into the heart of its scenic backcountry. Despite this belief, he claimed that he didn't want the parks covered with roads. He wanted to leave large areas of the park in their natural state, accessible only by trails.⁸² For this reason, the Mather era also saw the development of extensive trail systems throughout many of the parks.

Stephen Mather died suddenly in November 1928. Horace Albright, a close associate, succeeded him as Director of the National Park Service. Albright recognized that a more organized approach to park development and administration was necessary.⁸³ Albright also put more emphasis on park management recommendations made by wildlife biologists than Mather had. Despite this, Albright was a product of the Mather era and followed most of the same practices Mather had. Throughout Albright's term as Director the Park Service would remain focused on recreational tourism as its main priority.⁸⁴

The early years of national parks were characterized by haphazard development and a lack of direction. This situation did not greatly improve when the Park Service came into existence. Early superintendents were put in their positions as a result of political patronage; the most loyal Democrat or Republican got the job, not the most competent administrator. These superintendents, with very little experience, made development decisions that affected the future direction of the parks. Crater Lake's first superintendent, William Arant, is a perfect example of this trend. A well meaning man who had good intentions, he simply did what he thought was best for that moment, without an overarching plan for the future. The same can be said for William Gladstone Steel, although his interests were somewhat less benign. It is difficult to believe that

Steel separated his decisions as park superintendent from his financial interests as part owner of the Crater Lake Company. Finally, Stephen Mather was a Borax industry executive. Before becoming involved with the park service, Mather's job was to market 20 Mule Team Borax.⁸⁵ It is no wonder that he chose to market the parks from a tourist centered viewpoint; his experience in industry had taught him to please the consumer. These factors led to an administrative policy that, while claiming to be preservation focused, put a premium on the interests and desires of tourists.

The historical precedents set by Stephen Mather and succeeding directors have made preservation of the parks more difficult today. Legislative measures that outline standards for protection, like the Organic Act, are not useful to ensure preservation because of the ways they have been interpreted throughout history. The result of this is that park service officials may question the value of park policies but rarely change existing programs.⁸⁶ This is a prime example of what political scientist Charles E. Lindblom calls "the science of muddling through." Lindblom claims that policy decisions are made on the basis of successive limited comparisons. This leads to simplified decision-making because administrators focus on policies that differ only slightly or incrementally from previous policies. According to Lindblom, this method is useful because non-incremental policy proposals are politically irrelevant.⁸⁷ In other words, the National Park Service is subject to the kind of administrative malaise that infects every governmental agency. If we are to believe Charles Lindblom, because policies that emphasize tourism have already been put into place in the national parks, it is impossible for those policies to change dramatically.

An overview of Crater Lake National Park's strategic plans from the last six decades seems to confirm Lindblom's theory. Park management plans have certainly utilized incremental changes, however, these changes have added up to a radically different focus for today's park than was seen when it first opened. The changes accomplished during the last 70 years at Crater Lake have been due to accidental coincidences, not strategic management. These "accidents" allowed for a disruption of the muddling through model and have radically changed Crater Lake National Park.

During the early 1930s the Hoover Administration financed a construction boom at most of the National Parks, including Crater Lake. This boom was continued throughout the decade with funding and personnel made available by New Deal agencies like the Emergency Conservation Work Program and Public Works Administration.⁸⁸ At Crater Lake a cafeteria, store, and housekeeping cabins were constructed, along with the Sinnott Memorial Overlook on the south rim of the Crater. In addition to that, the 1930s saw an increase in landscaping and plantings along the trails. Other developments during the 1930s included additions to the park headquarters, new roads and parking areas, and enhanced strolling paths.⁸⁹ Basically, the 1930s represent an era of almost unstoppable development, and this was during a depressed economy.

The 1940s, and the start of World War II, brought a number of threats to the national parks. For example, the NPS was encouraged to open park lands to mining, logging, and grazing in order to support the war effort. NPS Director Newton Drury argued that the parks could make their greatest contribution by providing peaceful and inspirational refuge for the fighting men and women of the nation.⁹⁰ During the war the parks received less money from the federal government. They were also called upon to

loan equipment to various other government agencies to further the war effort. At Crater Lake, all surplus trucks, tools, equipment, and supplies were transferred to the army during the war.⁹¹ The focus of the war years was on outside events; the parks took a back seat and virtually no development was accomplished. Despite this, there was a significant amount of studying and planning for potential future developments. The most significant were the plans to develop a new park headquarters that would be more accessible during winter months. This was due to the increased interest in winter activities at the park.⁹² In summary, during the war years, there were no funds available for development but plans were made to continue development as soon as the war was over.

The post-war years saw a significant amount of money poured into the parks. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the focus in the parks, and in the rest of the nation, was improvement. The parks saw significantly larger numbers of visitors during these years but, because of years of neglect, they were, for the most part, unable to handle the sudden increases. Tourism became the main focus of the development program of these decades, Mission 66. Mission 66 was not, however, implemented equally in all the parks. Because the main focus of the Park Service was tourism, the parks with the greatest number of visitors saw the greatest benefits from the Mission 66 program. Crater Lake's visitation numbers were significantly lower than the numbers seen in the other parks and it was increasingly being seen as a stopover, rather than a terminal destination.⁹³ Beyond the low visitation numbers, NPS research indicated that most of the interest in the park came from regional visitors. More than 83 percent of visitors were from Oregon, Washington, or California.⁹⁴ The relatively small amount of attention and funding given

to the park during the Mission 66 era meant that Crater Lake did not see the kind of dramatic developments implemented at other parks. The lack of attention during the Mission 66 years led to a perception that the park would, from that time forward, focus more on ecological preservation than tourism. This shift was accidental on the part of the NPS and allowed Crater Lake to begin making more local decisions, rather than stick to the incremental policies of the greater Park Service.

Throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s Crater Lake continued to be treated more like an ecological preserve than a tourist destination. The NPS seemed to lose interest in the park, acknowledging that it would never be a main tourist destination. Senator Mark O. Hatfield became active in procuring federal resources for the park and increasing local interest. Hatfield blamed problems of water contamination and disrepair at Crater Lake lodge on inadequate staffing levels and hurried, substandard developments during the Mission 66 program.⁹⁵ Hatfield worked to increase allocations to the park and decrease NPS control over the direction of park development. He also worked to build partnerships between the park and the state's university system. These partnerships began to focus activity in the park on scientific exploration.

Scientific studies began to change park policies, in particular policies relating to the black bear population. For years park service officials had encouraged the growth of bear populations as a way of encouraging tourism. Scientific studies showed that bear "problems" in the park, such as increased incidents of human injury and property damage, were the result of bear management plans.⁹⁶ This led to a change in these plans, away from encouraging an increased bear population and toward "restoration and maintenance of the natural integrity, distribution, abundance, and behavior of the

endemic black bear population.”⁹⁷ Other scientific studies focused on the fire management plan, lake clarity studies, and, most recently, studying the bottom of the lake. The last 30 years of park planning have seen incredible changes in the focus. A park that was once focused almost entirely on tourism has evolved into a park dedicated to restoration and preservation of natural resources, scientific exploration, and education.

Crater Lake National Park has the potential to be a leader in a new movement to emphasize preservation in the parks. This is true because of Crater Lake’s unique position in the park service. Crater Lake has far less damage to undo than some of the other large parks in the system. The larger parks have political and physical obstacles to overcome on the way to becoming preservation-based natural areas. The large parks have developed huge commercial infrastructures and crowds of people who view them solely as vacation spots. Crater Lake does not face this situation.

Also, Crater Lake’s ecosystem is large enough to be of scientific value but small enough to allow preservation and interpretive staff to co-operative effectively. Finally, Crater Lake’s remote location and the fact that it is surrounded by other public lands help minimize external threats to its ecosystem.⁹⁸ Ironically, this isolation, which was once considered a liability, is now the park’s biggest asset. Crater Lake’s distinctiveness could allow it to become a leader in forging new policies for the Park Service.

The National Park Service has a model for how to accomplish the dual goals of its mandate in Crater Lake. Current park goals recognize the importance of identifying the impacts that proposed developments will have. The five year strategic plan has a goal that “by September 30, 2005, resource impacts from 100% of all proposed park projects will be identified in advance, mitigated and monitored through a park environmental

review process.”⁹⁹ A variety of other goals are mentioned in the strategic plan including goals for scientific research, preservation of historical and culturally significant sites, protection of endangered species, and, finally, that visitors to the lake understand its significance. The recreational enjoyment of visitors at the lake is mentioned only briefly and almost as a side note. Crater Lake National Park does not intend to bar visitors from the park. On the contrary, one of the goals of the strategic plan is a new 40 unit hotel and two new campgrounds.¹⁰⁰

The difference is that management of the park now focuses on environmental impact, not on customer satisfaction. William Gladstone Steel would have built a new hotel right on the rim of the lake in order to allow visitors the best views from their rooms. The current plan proposes that the new hotel be built five miles away from the rim so as not to damage the fragile ecosystem. The National Park Service must include visitors in their plans. After all, the American people fund the parks. However, visitor accommodations must be planned to minimize damage to the environment. Also, the parks should attempt to undo some of the damage that has already been done. Crater Lake National Park is attempting to control development and manage resources so that the lake will be enjoyable for future generations. This should be the goal of all of the parks in the National Park Service.

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